THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED) : (a) and (b) Government have seen the news item which appeared in the 'Hindustan Times' of 2nd August, 1993 with the caption "Qureshi : Pak can make nuclear bomb", quoting Pakistan's Caretaker Prime Minister Moeen Qureshi to the effect that Pakistan can manufacture a nuclear device whenever needed.

Government are aware of the pursuit of a clandestine and weapons-oriented nuclear programme by Pakistan and its implications for India's and regional security and stability have been conveyed to all concerned.

(c) Government have also seen reports regarding the commencement of construction work on a nuclear power plant in Pakistan at Chashma with Chinese assistance. China and Pakistan had signed an agreement on 31-12-1991 for the supply of a 300 MW nuclear power plant by China to Pakistan to be installed at Chashma.

(d) Government keep under constant review all developments having a bearing on India's security and take appropriate measures to safeguard the national interest.

India's Cultural Links with Central Asian Countries

3897. SHRI SHANKAR DAYAL SINGH : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to an article by the noted analyst Sh. K. P. Nayar published in Economic Times of 25th June, 1993 that India has not taken sufficient care to nurture our cultural links with Central Asian Countries;

(b) if so, what is the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(c) what steps are being initiated in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED) : (a) to (c) Government have taken a number of measures for strengthening cultural relations with the Central Asian Republics. Framework agreements have been signed for the development of cultural ties with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrghyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan and Cultural Exchange Programme have also been signed with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrghyzstan and Turkemenistan. A Cultural Exchange Programme with Tajikistan is being finalised. It is proposed to open Indian Cultural Centres at Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Almaty (Kazakhstan).

Indian Burnt to Death in USA

3898. CHOWDHRY HARI SINGH : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to Newsitem of Hindustan Times, New Delhi, dated 9th August, 1993, captioned 'Indian Burnt to death in USA';

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken about the case; and

(c) what are the full facts of the above case ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government are monitoring developments in this case which is still under investigation.

(c) An Indian student from Andhra Pradesh, Srinivas Chirukuri, succumbed to burn injuries on July 26. Srinivas Chirukuri had reportedly told the University of Nevada at Las Vegas (UNLV) Police Department Detectives before lapsing into unconsciousness that two men had broken into the lab where he had been working, doused him with an inflammable liquid and set him on fire. This led to speculation whether this Indian student had been a victim of a hate crime or an accident. The UNLV Police Department has, however, asserted that there is no evidence to suggest that it was a case of homicide and that evidence so far showed that Srinivas Chirukuri may have accidently ignited himself. According to the police there are indications that the chemical used came from the laboratory itself. However, investigations are still continuing.

Reservation of SC/ST for Ambassador/High Commissioners

3899. SHRI RAM RATAN RAM : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) what is the number of Ambassadors including High Commissioners who are working under the Ministry of External Affairs;

(b) what is the number out of them who